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ABSTRACT

Because public relations (PR) writing is different from the writing required in journalism, broadcasting, and advertising, PR practitioners require a background in editing, graphics, planning, campaigning, special events, public opinion, and evaluation beyond that required of a newswriter. Responses to a survey of 38 PR educators across the nation showed that a few offered a specific course in PR writing, a few included writing in a broader course of PR techniques, others included writing assignments in a variety of PR courses with broader educational goals, and a few expected the PR student to have the adaptability to integrate journalistic writing skills with PR objectives without any specific assignments devoted to that purpose. In addition to the national survey, 67 seniors enrolled in public relations courses at the University of Florida responded to a questionnaire on their college writing experiences that revealed a deficiency in practical PR writing. In response to the two surveys, a writing for public relations course was elevated from an elective to a required option for PR majors in the university's school of journalism. The content of the course includes: (1) valuing information and handling controversy, (2) tailoring news to fit the media audience, (3) reviewing copy with the client, (4) writing for publication, and (5) copy reviewing by peers. (Included are a course outline and the two survey instruments). (AEA)

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FOR TEACHING STANDARDS COMMITTEE
PUBLIC RELATIONS DIVISION
ASSOCIATION FOR EDUCATION IN JOURNALISM

PUBLIC RELATIONS WRITING IS DIFFERENT

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Public Relations Writing Is Different

Public relations writing is different from newswriting. While a course in newswriting is certainly essential to the basic training of a public relations practitioner, it only scratches the surface of the type of writing experiences facing those in public relations.

Public relations sequences respond to this need in a variety of ways. Responses from 38 public relations educators across the nation show that a few have a specific course in public relations writing, a few include writing in a broader course of public relations techniques, others include writing assignments in a variety of public relations courses with broader educational goals, and a few expect the public relations student to have the adaptability to integrate journalistic writing skills with public relations objectives without any specific assignments devoted to that purpose.

This paper is devoted principally to a discussion of how one large public relations sequence, with 310 majors, explored the advisability of creating a new course, Writing for Public Relations. The course was taught for more than a year as a professional elective, and in August 1981 will become part of a required option--the student taking either Writing for Public Relations or Magazine and Feature Writing. Both courses require Newswriting I as a prerequisite.

A survey of public relations educators conducted as part of this study revealed considerable disagreement on whether or not a public relations sequence needed a specific course on writing, but there was general agreement on subjects which should be taught.

A majority of the 38 respondents to the survey found eight objectives were common to the writing experiences of their public relations students.

TABLF I

WRITING EXPERIENCES COMMON
TO PUBLIC RELATIONS STUDENTS

Experience	Yes	No
Mechanics of preparing a press release for print	33	2
Adapting material to particular media style (newspapers, specialized magazines, broadcasting, etc.)	32	2
Mechanics for preparing news or public service announcements for radio	30	3
Analyzing timing of releases to maximize their impact or to meet specific communication objectives	29	5
Mechanics for preparing news or public service announcements for television	27	6
Writing communication objectives	24	10
Analyzing the relationship between the public relations practitioner and news media practitioner	24	10
Analyzing problem situation, including the handling of copy to mitigate conflict rather than to heighten it	20	9

Other suggested experiences were not as likely to be part of the public relations sequences described by the 38 questionnaire respondents.

Magazine and Feature Writing has been a required course in the public relations sequence since it was established nearly 15 years ago. The two-course option is obviously a compromise. Some faculty members desire for public relations students to have more diversified writing options; others hate to sacrifice the in-depth writing experiences that magazine features offer. Students will be advised to use their professional elective options to take both courses, but there was general agreement that the required core of courses should not exceed 27 semester hours.[1]

The writing proficiency of public relations students is a matter of serious concern. Educators are frequently criticized by professionals for taking writing too lightly.

The 1975 Commission on Public Relations Education had this to say: "It is noteworthy in this connection that all three practitioner members of the Commission have been concerned about the lack of writing skills among the public relations graduates."[2]

One Commission member, Betsy Ann Plank, was particularly critical of the writing opportunities available to public relations students in most public relations curricula:

> .....Witness the standard (and usually only) writing courses required in a Public Relations sequence: Newswriting I and II.
>
> Public relations writing requires more than that--or at least another direction in thinking and writing. This is the essential bridge between newswriting and "composition" which public relations educators ought to be providing, in my opinion.[3]

The course, Writing for Public Relations, is an advanced course, following an introductory writing course, Writing for Mass Communications, and Newswriting I. It also has another course, Introduction to Public Relations, as a prerequisite.

TABLE 2

LESS LIKELY WRITING EXPERIENCES
FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS STUDENTS

Experience	Yes	No
Reviewing copy with a client source prior to submission for publication	16	15
Preparing a speech for delivery by another	15	18
Writing a letter to editor, explaining client position	7	12
Writing memo to management (e.g., interview preparation, negative news, publicity opportunity, ethical responsibilities)	15	18

The 38 respondents were among 75 individuals sent a questionnaire about a public relations course at their institution in June 1980. There was a 50 percent return rate. The sample was drawn from a listing of 168 names in the October 1969 newsletter of the Public Relations Division of AEJ. Seventeen names were omitted from the sample pool because of one of three factors: Overseas address, an address indicating an industry address rather than a college or university, and the author's colleagues at his own institution. The 75 names in the sample were drawn randomly from the 149 names remaining in the sample pool. One questionnaire proved undeliverable.

There is no evidence of duplication of the same institution in the responses. Most of the respondents identified themselves and their institution in order to receive a summary of the research results. The postmark also revealed the general responses of other returned questionnaires, although one postmark proved to be unreadable. Participating institutions or postmarked locations are listed in Appendix A.

A majority of the respondents indicated that they had no specialized writing course for public relations students, but written comments showed that curriculum variations were so diverse that the questions posed to the respondents were not discreet or inclusive enough to fit their exact situation. Fortunately, a majority of the respondents took the trouble to amplify their answers. For instance, a few schools had a course in "public relations techniques." This course covered writing, but it also covered other communication skills. Some viewed this as a specialized course in public relations writing, but others did not.

Writing assignments in public relations were part of from two to five courses in the curriculum of sequences represented by the 38 respondents. However, a majority of the respondents did not feel they had sufficient information to estimate the number of specific writing assignments their students might perform in the public relations sequence. While the mere number of such assignments performed is not a clear indicator of writing proficiency, it is often a rough indicator used by potential employers to judge a student's writing proficiency.

The student may be asked a series of questions, such as: How many articles have you published? How many news releases have you written? How many times have you set out to cover a news event or feature idea with television in mind? Have you ever written "pitch letters" to television or radio program directors? Have you ever written a speech?

With this in mind, the Advertising and Public Relations Department curriculum committee at the University of Florida began its exploration of a specialized writing course in public relations with a survey of faculty and senior students on the students'

writing experiences. The department's eight public relations faculty members were asked to specify three levels of attainment for 12 types of writing experiences:

"Desired Expectation" -- The desired level of achievement which a student should achieve prior to graduation.

"Minimum Expectation" -- The minimum expectation which a student should achieve prior to graduation.

"Typical Achievement" -- An estimate of the achievement which the typical public relations student attains prior to graduation.

While there was an assumption that the "typical" attainment of public relations majors would fall somewhere between the "minimum" expectation and the "desired," several of the faculty members rated the "typical" student's achievement as below the minimum--expressing a belief that their writing experiences were not up to even the most basic standard.

At the same time the questionnaire on 12 types of writing assignments was administered to a convenience sample of 67 seniors in the public relations sequence. The seniors were enrolled in one of the following courses: Advanced Public Relations (2 sections), Public Opinion Theory and Advertising, Seminar: Ethics and Problems in Public Relations, Business and Technical Communications, or a specialty course, Public Relations in Criminal Justice.

The respondents in the convenience sample represented approximately one-half of the public relations seniors in the department. Those students missed either were not taking a course in the department during the winter quarter 1979 or did not attend class on the day in which the questionnaire was administered in their section.

The questionnaire identified 12 types of writing assignments and asked the students and faculty members to record how many times

students had engaged in each type of writing. The self-reports from the public relations students revealed that they had generally done less writing than had been estimated for the "typical" student by the faculty--even though the faculty's assessment of the performance of the "typical" student was frequently below the minimum level of attainment thought necessary by the faculty for public relations graduates.

The 12 types of writing identified were: (1) Published articles (clippings), (2) Feature articles prepared for print, (3) Press releases prepared for client, (4) Radio news items, (5) Radio public service announcements, (6) Television news items, (7) Television public service announcements, (8) Speeches (written), (9) Business letters, (10) Fact sheets, (11) Letters to editor, and (12) Other forms of writing such as brochures, ads, etc.

Other questions were designed to determine whether such variables as nearness of graduation or confidence of the student in his or her writing ability were related to the quantity of their self-reported writing experience. In both cases, there were no significant differences. The range of writing experiences among the 68 students varied widely, but most of the students fell well below the level of experience desired by the faculty.

A scale making distinctions between response levels in each of the 12 writing categories was designed by adopting the following code:

(1) a response of "0" experience

(2) a response of "1" or "2"

(3) a response of "3" to "5"

(4) a response of "6" to "10"

(5) a response of more than "10"

A mean was computed for each of the three coded scales for faculty responses and for the student self-reports. This gave an indication of student achievement in terms of the three levels of faculty expectation.

TABLE 3

CODED SCORES FOR FACULTY,
STUDENT WRITING RESPONSES

1. Number of published articles (clippings)

	Scale Mean	Explanation
Faculty desired goal	4.25	(6 to 10 experiences)
Faculty minimum expectation	2.88	(less than 3 experiences)
Faculty estimate of seniors	2.38	(1 or 2 experiences)
PR senior self-report	2.27	(1 or 2 experiences)

(66% of seniors below minimum faculty expectation; 66% below faculty estimate of typical student performance)

2. Number of feature articles prepared for print

	Scale Mean	Explanation
Faculty desired goal	4.00	(6 to 10 experiences)
Faculty minimum expectation	3.00	(3 to 5 experiences)
Faculty estimate of seniors	2.75	(less than 3 experiences)
PR senior self-report	3.06	(3 to 5 experiences)

(37% of seniors below minimum faculty expectation; 37% below faculty estimate of typical student performance)

3. Number of press releases prepared for client

	Scale Mean	Explanation
Faculty desired goal	4.00	(6 to 10 experiences)
Faculty minimum expectation	3.13	(3 to 5 experiences)
Faculty estimate of seniors	2.50	(less than 3 experiences)
PR senior self-report	2.70	(less than 3 experiences)

(73% of seniors below minimum faculty expectation; 51% below faculty estimate of typical student performance)

4. Number of radio news items prepared

	Scale Mean	Explanation
Faculty desired goal	3.63	(more than 5 experiences)
Faculty minimum expectation	2.50	(less than 3 experiences)
Faculty estimate of seniors	1.83	(less than 1 experience)
PR senior self-report	1.78	(less than 1 experience)

(78% of seniors below minimum faculty expectation; 60% below faculty estimate of typical student performance)

5. Number of radio public service items originated

	Scale Mean	Explanation
Faculty desired goal	3.63	(more than 5 experiences)
Faculty minimum expectation	2.75	(less than 3 experiences)
Faculty estimate of seniors	2.38	(1 to 2 experiences)
PR senior self-report	2.33	(1 to 2 experiences)

(58% of seniors below minimum faculty expectation; 58% below faculty estimate of typical student performance)

6. Number of television news items originated

	Scale Mean	Explanation
Faculty desired goal	3.38	(3 to 5 experiences)
Faculty minimum expectation	2.12	(1 or 2 experiences)
Faculty estimate of seniors	1.13	(no experience)
PR senior self-report	1.15	(no experience)

(96% of seniors below minimum faculty expectation; 91% below faculty estimate of typical student performance)

7. Number of television public service items originated

	Scale Mean	Explanation
Faculty desired goal	3.50	(less than 6 experiences)
Faculty minimum expectation	2.00	(1 or 2 experiences)
Faculty estimate of seniors	1.25	(no experience)
PR senior self-report	1.40	(no experience)

(73% of seniors below minimum faculty expectation; 73% below faculty estimate of typical student performance)

8. Number of speeches written

	Scale Mean	Explanation
Faculty desired goal	3.00	(3 to 5 experiences)
Faculty minimum expectation	2.75	(less than 3 experiences)
Faculty estimate of seniors	1.75	(less than 1 experience)
PR senior self-report	3.20	(3 to 5 experiences)

(28% of seniors below minimum faculty expectation; 12% below faculty estimate of typical student performance)

9. Number of business letters written

	Scale Mean	Explanation
Faculty desired goal	3.25	(3 to 5 experiences)
Faculty minimum expectation	3.13	(3 to 5 experiences)
Faculty estimate of seniors	2.25	(1 or 2 experiences)
PR senior self-report	4.13	(6 to 10 experiences)

(26% of seniors below minimum faculty expectation; 13% below faculty estimate of typical student performance)

10. Number of fact sheets prepared

	Scale Mean	Explanation
Faculty desired goal	3.25	(3 to 5 experiences)
Faculty minimum expectation	2.50	(less than 3 experiences)
Faculty estimate of seniors	1.25	(no experience)
PR senior self-report	2.13	(1 or 2 experiences)

(70% of seniors below minimum faculty expectation; 39% below faculty estimate of typical student performance)

11. Number of letters to editor

	Scale Mean	Explanation
Faculty desired goal	2.75	(less than 3 experiences)
Faculty minimum expectation	2.12	(1 or 2 experiences)
Faculty estimate of seniors	1.13	(no experience)
PR senior self-report	1.66	(less than 1 experience)

(85% of seniors below minimum faculty expectation; 55% below faculty estimate of typical student performance)

12. Number of other writings (brochures, ads, etc.)

	Scale Mean	Explanation
Faculty desired goal	3.88	(less than 6 experiences)
Faculty minimum expectation	3.00	(3 to 5 experiences)

	Scale Mean	Explanation
Faculty estimate of seniors	2.12	(1 or 2 experiences)
PR senior self-report	1.66	(less than 1 experience)

(37% of seniors below minimum faculty expectation; 37% below faculty estimate of typical student performance)

Experience levels were lowest in the broadcast areas, revealing a print-oriented curriculum. Even when expectations were low, actual student experiences were lower yet: 91 percent of the students had never prepared a television news item, 73 percent had never prepared a public service announcement for television, 60 percent had never produced a radio news item and 58 percent had not written more than two radio public service announcements.

Even in the print area, where student performance might be expected to be high, the actual performance of students was below faculty expectations. Fifty-one percent of the students said they had not prepared more than two press releases for a client, and 66 percent had no more than two published articles. Student performance was beyond faculty expectations in only two areas--speech writing and business letter writing--both outside the media-oriented skills traditionally emphasized in a journalism school.

With the need for more writing assignments evident in most areas, the faculty faced the problem of how to build more writing assignments into the curriculum. Most existing courses were structured with other goals in mind. Public relations students might be required to take a broadcast writing course, but the desired course had a broadcasting prerequisite--making such an option a two-course requirement.

Respondents in the national sample reflected the dilemma of public relations writing instruction. Do PR students need more media courses, or do they need specialized courses of their own?

One faculty member expressed a general concern:

> ...PR faculty members seem to want to build their own empires with all to many specialized PR courses. The very title of your questionnaire raises questions--What is PR Writing? Are periods placed in different spots? Do we spell words differently? Are we less truthful? Do we learn to cover-up better? Teach them to write and teach them some ethics and theory of communication and they will do okay...

A similar concern about a specialized course was expressed by a Pennsylvania educator in the national sample:

> As our program in Public Relations has grown, we have consulted area practitioners, who are our major employers and source of internships. They all feel the basic news writing course is more meaningful than a special course in PR writing. Of course, we emphasize PR writing in our Science Writing and Feature Writing courses. My personal emphasis has been on educating versatile writers who, like chameleons, can readily adapt to the changing environment.

Advocates of a specialized writing program for public relations students divide on whether or not a course is necessary for that purpose. Twenty-one of the respondents in the national sample said they had no Writing for Public Relations course, but many commented that extensive writing assignments were given in other courses. No one said they had tried such a course and abandoned it as unnecessary, but three indicated they were experimenting with the idea of creating one.

One Michigan educator commented:

> For the first time this fall we will be offering a special topics course entitled Writing for Public Relations. This is experimental with us--we may decide to continue.

A California educator commented about the need for such a course:

> ...The students--both undergrads and graduating seniors in our PR major complained about the shallowness of a PR major that includes no course such as you outline. The students expressed hope that a workshop/writing course be added. They object to a course titled PR/Magazine and

> feel that curricula should cover areas like those you detail. They agree with you that basic reporting and PR writing are not the same. They feel short-changed as they go into internships and find they do not have the skills they need...

The University of Florida solution to this division was something of a compromise. Writing for Public Relations was elevated from a special topics elective to a required option--paired with Magazine and Feature Article Writing. In other words, public relations students can now "vote with their feet." They can make their own choice between the two courses, although they will be counseled to take both--one as a professional elective--for more complete writing proficiency.

The difference between the two courses is considerable. The Magazine and Feature Article course is devoted to developing three or four polished manuscripts, usually going through a series of drafts, of pieces requiring a good bit of original research. The in-depth writing experience it offers is not duplicated elsewhere in the public relations sequence.

Writing for Public Relations, on the other hand, is devoted to approximately 25 writing assignments, at least half of them written under laboratory conditions. Several of the assignments are devoted to the broadcast media. Based on the writing experiences noted by seniors in the 1979 survey, this one course can more than double the public relations writing output of the typical senior.

One of the reasons the course was not required of all students is the excellent experience already received by the accomplished student in the present curriculum. These students take on the writing assignments in team projects and seek out internships in which a good deal of writing is required. Such students will be

counseled into the Magazine and Feature Writing course, while students with minimal writing experiences will be counseled into Writing for Public Relations.

Nationally, educators were divided on the extent of writing experiences achieved by their students. Many felt that their students' writing opportunities were more than adequate; others expressed the need for more writing assignments. Unfortunately, most educators expressed insufficient knowledge of their seniors' writing experiences to be able to estimate the number of specific writing assignments that they undertake as part of their curriculum.

Of those who made such estimates--approximately one-third of the 38 respondents--the projected experience level of seniors was estimated to be closer to the University of Florida faculty's "desired" achievement level rather than the lower level of achievement actually found in student self-reports.

Content of Writing for Public Relations

In terms of course content, there are some obvious differences from the writing courses regularly available to students under traditional journalism auspices.

Valuing Information--One of the primary goals of Writing for Public Relations is to give students practical application in valuing information from a public relations perspective. This involves integration of traditional news values with the informational goals of the client. Much of this has been discussed in other public relations classes, but the writing course converts such principles into words-on-paper realities.

How to handle conflict is the focus of several discussions and assignments. Traditional news values magnify conflict, one

of the reasons that public relations evolved. Newsmen seek to intensify conflict, to sharpen divisions between contenders. Public relations practitioners, on the other hand, often function in conflict-resolution roles. While they cannot deliberately "cover up" controversy, particularly controversy of high public interest, they focus communication at solving rather than exacerbating problems.

Even apart from controversy, public relations writing becomes intricate as the student juggles such questions as "What will the editor accept?", "What information is helpful or interesting to the public?" and "What informational goals of the client does this information fit?"

The irony of the public relations practitioner-news editor relationship is discussed. While the latter is frequently fearful of being manipulated by those in public relations, the reverse is more common. Public relations practitioners begin to follow the least line of resistance in press relations, preparing materials readily acceptable to newsrooms without concern about how such information ranks in the hierarchy of values held by the client.

Tailoring News--One of the early assignments in Writing for Public Relations involves tailoring facts from the same fact sheet for different audiences and different media. An "executive appointment" is written for the local business page, for the executive's alumni magazine and in a letter to the local television station which suggests picture and interview possibilities. The lesson: Don't send out a single, all-purpose release in public relations. The same story can be told in many ways to a variety of media audiences.

Midway through the course, when the emphasis shifts primarily to writing for the ear, several assignments involve writing one version for print and another for broadcast. Most of the guest instructors are broadcasting instructors or professionals, offsetting the print orientation of the instructor. Students get some instruction on how to interest and cooperate with television news departments, since many Florida stations do not accept film from public relations sources.

Copy Review by Management--Journalistic writing courses create an unreal environment for the public relations student in terms of source review of writing content. It is considered a breach of journalistic ethics for the source of a story to review the copy prior to publication. Journalists do not wish to render themselves vunerable to pressure from the source, even at the risk of getting the facts wrong.

In public relations, on the other hand, review of written copy by source is frequent. It is one reason that the factual accuracy of press releases is far superior to media-generated stories; press releases have been checked by someone other than the writer who is thoroughly familiar with the facts. Most practitioners know by experience what embarrassment such checking can save them.

On several assignments, including any assignment actually produced for delivery to the news media, the student must have the copy checked by the client. The instructor's copy of such stories carries the client's initials. Students careless with facts undergo an instructional process in such encounters that few wish to repeat.

Writing for Publication--In the journalism sequence, actual writing for publication often comes after Newswriting I. If the

public relations student stops writing at such a level, he or she may never enter a newsroom to deliver a story. In feature writing, most of the articles are placed in the mail. Face-to-face contact with someone in news or public affairs is a part of several assignments in Writing for Public Relations. These stories require the initials of a recipient at the desired medium on a note indicating that the story has been delivered.

Students receive extra credit for published stories. There is no final examination in Writing for Public Relations, but students are encouraged to use exam week to remedy any deficiencies in their record by writing two additional assignments for publication. These two assignments are accepted for averaging with other term grades before computation of the final grade. In addition, a third assignment may substitute for a story receiving a low grade during the term. Every effort is made to encourage students to have as much writing experience as possible, particularly for publication.

Copy Review by Peers--Following a technique described at this forum a year ago and more recently described in The Journalism Educator,[4] students submit their copy to peer review at least once during the term. All of the students interview the same source and prepare a two-page release from the interview. The stories are photocopied front-and-back to produce sufficient copies for all class members.

Students rank each of the articles written on the basis of effectiveness, commenting on why they selected their three top choices and why they downgraded the three stories which they ranked the worst. Student grades on the writing assignment are based largely upon their peer rankings. Separately, the students are

also graded upon the perception shown in their analysis. The process takes several days to complete. First, the speaker, then story submission; then return of duplicated articles; then submission of analyses and, finally, announcement of the rankings and graded analyses. The students review papers identified only by number rather than the writer's name.

Summary and Conclusion

The diversified nature of public relations activities requires a diversified curriculum to train future practitioners for entry-level positions. Practitioners cannot concentrate in one writing framework as their counterparts in journalism, broadcasting and advertising. They require a background in editing, graphics, planning, campaigning, special events, public opinion and evaluation that far transcends the complexity of communication skills required by the newsperson.

After Newswriting I, the news-editorial student continues to polish basic journalistic skills. The public relations student goes on to a course in campaigns or audio-visual presentations which still make use of basic skills but add many new skills to be mastered. In the process, one major public relations program found that it was neglecting the basics. The self-reported experience of seniors in simple writing skills was considerably below minimum faculty expectations.

A course, Writing for Public Relations, addresses many of these deficiencies. However, the curriculum has been developed to the point that no new course can be required without sacrificing other cherished objectives--the goal of keeping professional courses approximating one-fourth of the total college curriculum and the desire for the student to have a choice of two or three professional

electives. In a compromise, Writing for Public Relations was paired with Magazine and Feature Writing as a required option. This did not increase the number of writing courses in the curriculum, but it did provide two courses with sharply contrasting assignments. While students will be encouraged to take both courses, those seeking to avoid writing experiences will not necessarily gain by the move.

Nationally, 3[illegible] respondents revealed that most public relations sequences do not contain a specific writing course. A few sense a need for such a course and may even be planning one, but most educators believe that writing needs of their students are being met in other courses. Few of the educators felt in a position to accurately assess the writing experiences of their students. Since such an assessment was the starting point for concern about the student's writing experience at one major school, these educators may find that a survey of their own student's achievements might prove instructive.

Footnotes:

[1]

Courses Required	Semester Hours
Writing for Mass Communications	3
Newswriting I	3
Introduction to Public Relations	3
Editing and Graphics	3
(Writing for Public Relations)	(3)
or	
(Magazine and Feature Writing)	(3)
Public Opinion Theory and Research	3
Advanced Public Relations	3
Business and Technical Communications	3
Law of Mass Communication	3
	27

[2]Commission on Public Relations Education, A Design for Public Relations Education, study co-sponsored by Public Relations Division of AEJ and Public Relations Society of America, 1975, p. 6.

[3]Ibid., p. 7.

4James H. Bissland, "Peer Evaluation Method Promotes Sharper Writing," Journalism Educator, Vol. 34. No. 4, January 1980, p. 17.

APPENDIX A

SOURCE OF RESPONDENTS FOR EDUCATOR QUESTIONNAIRE

Identified Colleges and Universities

1. University of Alabama
2. Abiline Christian College
3. Ball State University
4. California Poly, San Luis Obispo
5. California State University, Fresno
6. California State University, San Jose
7. University of Central Michigan
8. Colorado State University
9. University of Florida
10. Florida A & M University
11. University of Georgia
12. Indiana University
13. Kent State University
14. University of Maryland
15. New York University
16. University of North Florida
17. North Texas State University
18. Ohio State University
19. Saint Michael's College, Winnooski, Vt.
20. San Diego State University
21. Shippensburg State College
22. University of Southern California
23. Southern Connecticut State College
24. University of Southern Mississippi
25. University of Washington
26. West Virginia University
27. University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire

Postmarks

28. Clarksburg, West Virginia
29. Columbia, South Carolina
30. Laramie, Wyoming
31. Madison, Wisconsin
32. Los Angeles, California
33. Oakland, California
34. San Diego, California
35. San Mateo, California
36. Springfield, Missouri
37. Upland, California
38. Postmark obscured

APPENDIX B - NATIONAL EDUCATOR QUESTIONNAIRE

PUBLIC RELATIONS WRITING
Survey of Practices at U.S. Colleges and Universities

This questionnaire is designed to be completed by a public relations faculty member at your college or university who is most familiar with the writing experiences of public relations majors. If you feel there is another faculty member at your institution best suited to complete this questionnaire, and that faculty member is available this summer, please pass it along to him or her. Only one completed questionnaire is needed from each institution. Please complete and return by July 1, 1980.

Writing courses available for public relations students

Yes No

21 11 1. We have no specialized writing course for public relations students. They learn writing skills through our regular news writing courses.

The number of such courses required of public relations students are:

4 (a) One
12 (b) Two
5 (c) Three
2 (d) Four or more

16 17 2. We have an introductory writing course that includes public relations assignments among other assignments in journalistic writing.

The staffing of this course provides:

4 (a) All students are exposed to instructors from the various communications disciplines, including public relations, each teaching his or her specialty

6 (b) All students are taught by news editorial instructors

3 (c) Instructors from various communications disciplines teach sections composed of students seeking majors in each discipline

3 (d) Instructors from various communications disciplines teach sections composed of students primarily in their own discipline

1 (e) Other: _____

16 15 3. We have a public relations writing course or courses.

Prerequisites for this course are as follows (check more than one, if applicable):

2 (a) None

5 (b) Introductory journalistic writing course

9 (c) News writing course

12 (d) Introductory public relations course

___ (e) Other: 23 5

Yes	No	
17	12	4. We do not have a public relations writing course, but students are given writing assignments in general public relations courses.

Types of public relations writing experiences common to our students:

Yes	No	
32	5	5. Adapting material to particular media style (newspapers, specialized magazines, broadcasting, etc.)
33	2	6. Mechanics of preparing a press release for print.
30	3	7. Mechanics of preparing news or public service announcements for radio.
27	6	8. Mechanics of preparing news or public service announcements for television.
20	9	9. Analyzing problems situation, including the handling of copy to mitigate conflict rather than to highlight it.
16	15	10. Reviewing copy with client source prior to submission for publication.
15	18	11. Preparing speech for delivery by another.
7	25	12. Writing letters to editor, explaining client position.
29	5	13. Analyzing timing of releases to maximum their impact or to meet specivic communications objectives.
15	18	14. Writing memos to management (e.g., interview preparation, negative news, publicity opportunity, ethical responsibilities).
24	10	15. Writing communication objectives.
24	10	16. Analyzing the relationship between the public relations practitioner and news media representative.

Estimated writing experiences of public relations graduates (all classes):

___	17. Number of published articles (clippings).	14 of 38 responses
___	18. Number of feature articles prepared for print.	16
___	19. Number of press releases prepared for client.	16
___	20. Number of radio news items prepared.	16
___	21. Number of radio public service items originated.	16
___	22. Number of television news items originated.	16
___	23. Number of television public service items originated.	16
___	24. Number of speeches written.	16

___ 25. Number of business letters written. 15 of 38 responses
___ 26. Number of fact sheets prepared. 14
___ 27. Number of letters to editor. 13
___ 28. Number of other types of writing (brochures, ads, etc.). 13

Any general comments you wish to make:

21 of 38 responses

___ Please send me a summary of the results of this study.

Name _____

Address _____

_____

_____

APPENDIX C

PR STUDENT SELF-REPORT RESPONSES

Total responses, with percentages, for 67 public relations seniors who were respondents to a questionnaire on their writing experiences in February-March 1979.

Key: (1) None (2) 1 or 2 (3) 3 to 5 (4) 6 to 10 (5) More than 10.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1. Number of published articles (clippings)	24 36%	20 30%	10 14%	7 10%	6 9%
2. Number of feature articles prepared for print	2 3%	23 34%	21 31%	11 16%	10 15%
3. Number of press releases prepared for client	10 15%	24 36%	15 22%	12 18%	6 9%
4. Number of radio news items prepared	40 60%	12 18%	8 12%	4 6%	3 5%
5. Number of radio public service items prepared	24 36%	15 22%	16 24%	6 9%	6 9%
6. Number of television news items originated	61 91%	3 5%	2 3%	1 2%	0 0%
7. Number of television public service items originated	49 73%	12 18%	4 6%	1 2%	1 2%
8. Number of speeches written	8 12%	11 16%	20 30%	15 22%	13 19%
9. Number of business letters written	5 8%	3 5%	9 13%	11 16%	39 58%
10. Number of fact sheets prepared	26 39%	21 31%	8 12%	9 13%	3 5%
11. Number of letters to editor	37 55%	20 30%	8 12%	0 0%	2 3%
12. Other writings (brochures, ads, etc.)	12 18%	13 19%	21 31%	13 19%	8 12%